

ACCURACY IN MEDIA INC.

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July 28, 1972

Mr. Reuven Frank
President
NBC News
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Frank:

Accuracy in Media wishes to call to your attention a few apparently erroneous statements in the Chronolog program of July 28 on the narcotics traffic in Southeast Asia.

Mr. Utley, the narrator, made the following statement.

"CIA went to the publishing house of Harper & Row to get and to read the manuscript of McCoy's book before its publication date. And surprisingly Harper and Row acquiesced. It surrendered to the threat of prior censorship."

A story on this matter was published in The New York Times on July 22. According to this story, CIA asked to have an opportunity to review the book because it believed that it contained statements concerning the agency that were totally false and without foundation. The CIA letter to Harper and Row stated: "It is our belief that no reputable publishing house would wish to publish such allegations without being assured that the supporting evidence was valid."

B. Brooks Thomas, vice president and general counsel of Harper and Row, said: "We're not submitting to censorship or anything like that. We're taking a responsible middle position. I just believe that the CIA should have the chance to review it."

I am sure that it is known at NBC that manuscripts being considered by reputable publishers are always submitted to experts for review prior to publication. One of the big mistakes McGraw-Hill made with the Irving book on Howard Hughes was that it did not take the precaution of having the book read by people who were sufficiently knowledgeable about the subject of the book. Of course, a publisher is free to accept or reject the suggestions made by the reviewers. We think it would be irresponsible for a publisher to ignore warnings that a manuscript contained serious inaccuracies and to refuse to permit those able to point out the inaccuracies to have an opportunity to do so prior to publication. By taking every precaution to insure accuracy, the publisher helps establish his own credibility, the credibility of the book, and he avoids increasing the amount of misinformation that circulates in public channels. We do not think this has any connection with censorship, which connotes legal compulsion to prevent statements from being published. Since CIA has no legal power to prevent Harper and Row from publishing anything, Mr. Utley's charge that the publisher had submitted to prior censorship seems to be clearly false.

A second statement that was made on this program that probably conveyed inaccurate information to the viewer was the following:

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"And there was the Thai government's well publicized extravaganza in the golden triangle--the burning of 26 tons of opium. It came just after U. S. Congressman Lester Wolff accused the Thais of inadequate drug control. A skeptic would see it as strong public relations covering up weak law enforcement."

While you now describe this event as "well publicized," AIM has a complaint that this event was almost totally ignored by American TV and newspapers. Did NBC News report the opium destruction to its viewers in March? Do you have any evidence that this was well publicized by the American news media?

If the amount of opium destroyed was in fact 26 tons, this would rate as one of the largest seizures of this drug in history. The U. S. street value of 26 tons of opium converted into heroin would be about \$1.3 billion. To pass such a seizure off as "weak law enforcement" while making much of the seizure in New York of only 260 lbs. of heroin in the Jaguar automobile seems very odd.

A third flaw in the program was the failure to mention anything about the involvement of communist countries in drug production and traffic. Since the program purported to be a presentation of the facts about opium and heroin production and traffic in the Far East, the omission of any mention of opium production in Communist China stood out as a grave deficiency. Fact Sheet 2 of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs states:

In the Far East, opium is cultivated in vast quantities in the Yunnan Province of China and the Shan and Kachin States in Burma. Although much is consumed by opium smokers in the region, considerable amounts of the drug find their way to the United States.

The Report of the Seventeenth Session (1962) of the United Nations' Commission on Narcotic Drugs included specific details about the production of opium in Yunnan Province and its being transported to Burma. Former BNDD Commissioner, Harry Anslinger, is on record in testimony given the U. N. Commission on Narcotic Drugs with detailed information about the involvement of the Chinese Communists in the illicit opium traffic. In addition, there is the statement of the Egyptian newspaper, Al Ahram, that Premier Chou En-Lai told Nasser in 1965 that China was planting the best kinds of opium especially for the American troops in Vietnam. Chou reportedly said that they would seek to bring about the demoralization of the American forces with drugs. In a speech on September 21, 1961, Congressman Francis E. Walter charged that the Chinese were guilty of using "dope warfare" against American troops in the Korean War. It was reported that an opium processing plant was found by American troops in Pyongyang, Korea.

The Washington Intelligence Report for March-April 1972 also points out that North Vietnam is producing opium. A North Vietnamese defector, Nguyen Ngoc Mai, a journalist formerly with the Hanoi newspaper, Tien Phong, described huge poppy fields that he had seen in Ha Giang, Son La, Lai Chau and Cao Bang provinces in North Vietnam. He said half of the raw opium was sent to China for processing and the rest of it was loaded on Soviet ships. According to this Report, The Soviet Union officially reported importing 29,000 lbs. of opium from North Vietnam in 1962, even though North Vietnam was denying that it was producing opium.

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It is not necessary to go into all of the evidence of involvement by both Communist China and North Vietnam in the opium and heroin traffic. You can surely find a great deal of information on this subject if you wish to investigate it. In addition to the issue of The Washington Intelligence Report mentioned above, you may want to refer to the Congressional Record of March 29, 1972. Congressman John Ashbrook had a long insertion in the Record beginning on page H 2848 on the role of Communist China in the drug traffic.

It seems that the evidence of Communist complicity is strong enough to cast serious doubt on the accuracy of the remark that your documentary attributed to an unidentified anthropologist to the effect that the communists were "bad for the opium business." On the contrary, they would appear to be very much involved in it.

A few days before you aired your program which was clearly designed to convey the impression that the government of Thailand was not being cooperative in cracking down on opium traffickers, I noted a report in the Washington Post to the effect that Thai agents had seized some \$232 million worth of dangerous drugs in two raids on July 23 and July 24 at Mai Sai. This seizure dwarfs the seizures made in this country over long periods of time. Yet you gave no credit to the Thai government for this outstanding success.

One additional small point. In putting Fred Branfman on the air to make some unsubstantiated charges, you identified him only as a former IVIS worker in Vietnam. I presume that this is the same Fred Branfman who was identified in the Washington Post on July 28 as director of "Project Air War," a research group critical of American involvement in the Indochina war. Mr. Branfman was mentioned in the Post as having distributed material about damage to the dikes in North Vietnam. While Mr. Branfman's very active involvement in anti-war activities does not necessarily discredit him as a witness on the drug problem, it would seem that his activist role ought not to be concealed by NBC, since it is not entirely irrelevant in the evaluation of his statements.

Accuracy in Media would appreciate receiving your comments on this analysis of the errors in the NBC documentary at your early convenience.

Sincerely yours,

Abraham H. Kalish
Abraham H. Kalish
Executive Secretary

cc: Mr. Julian Goodman
Mr. Nelson Gross
Cong. John Ashbrook
Cong. Robert Steele
Cong. Lester Wolff
Mr. Winthrop Knowlton
Mr. Richard Helms